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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

July 17, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JUDY BIGGERT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 8. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to phaseout the estate and gift taxes over a 10-year period.

H.R. 4391. An act to amend title 4 of the United States Code to establish sourcing requirements for State and local taxation of mobile telecommunication services.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4205. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 4205) "An Act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe

personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes," requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. WARNER, Mr. THURMOND, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SANTORUM, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. HUTCHINSON, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. BYRD, Mr. ROBB, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. CLELAND, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. REED, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

GAS PRICES

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I am here to speak on a growing controversy, the controversy of who is to blame for the high gas prices, particularly in the Midwest, the high spikes. Some say it is big oil and others say it is the result of the EPA forcing through Phase II formulated gasoline.

Let us this afternoon analyze the facts and begin to see where the responsibility lies. Let me cite from an internal Energy Department memo that proves that the administration knew that the new formulated gasoline, RFG, as required by EPA was a major reason for the spikes in the Midwest.

The memo was circulated while the administration was publicly blasting the big oil companies for gouging Americans. The Washington Times obtained the June 5 memo that was written for Secretary Richardson of the Department of Energy by the Department's acting policy director, Ms. Kenderdine.

This memo mirrors what analysts and oil companies have been stating; the mix of high demand and low supply has led to high prices for all gasoline. We all realize that; that makes sense. Of course, that is part of the cycle in a free market experience. The disturbing part of that memo goes on to say, and let me quote, Madam Speaker, "the Milwaukee and Chicago areas supply situation is further affected by, among other things, an RFG formulation specific to the area that is more difficult to produce."

Despite the clear-cut facts in the memo, the administration has claimed that the price hikes and spikes were unexplainable. In fact, they have openly speculated that it is probably big business beating up on poor citizens again. When, in fact, it is big government beating up on the American taxpayers again.

Refineries have been working to capacity to produce a new EPA-mandated gasoline and have been strained to meet the summer demands. This has left reserve supplies in a dangerous position.

According to the DOE memo, Chicago refineries do not have the capacity to step up production when there is a shortage and the specifically formulated gasoline mixed with the ethanol in the region could not be imported from other areas because few make the unique blend of fuel.

The most damaging evidence is the conclusion in that memo from June 5 that supplies were sufficient to meet overall demand at the time. The market was "sufficiently tight," he went

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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